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Author(s): James E. Goehring

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# Withdrawing from the Desert: Pachomius and the Development of Village Monasticism in Upper Egypt<sup>1</sup>

James E. Goehring  
*Mary Washington College*

In a recent article entitled “Le monachisme égyptien et les villes,”<sup>2</sup> Ewa Wipszycka cataloged for the later Byzantine period the abundant evidence of monastic habitation in or adjacent to the towns and villages of Egypt as well as in or on the margins of the cultivated land. Her analysis, which begins after the late third- to fourth-century formative period of Antony, Pachomius, and the Lower Egyptian semi-anchoritic centers in Nitria, Scetis, and Cellia, supplies convincing evidence of the rhetorical selectivity employed in the portrayal of Egyptian monasticism by the authors of the literary sources. In the literary texts, the dominance of monastic sites located in places of solitude generates a monastic geography of physical isolation. While acknowledging this dominance in the literature, Wipszycka draws together the infrequent literary references and the more numerous documentary examples of less physically isolated and more socially integrated monastic centers.<sup>3</sup> The resulting picture of Egyptian mo-

<sup>1</sup>I first delivered a shortened form of this paper at the Twelfth International Conference on Patristic Studies, Oxford, 21–26 August 1995. I wish to thank Richard Valantasis for his helpful comments on the final form of the paper.

<sup>2</sup>Ewa Wipszycka, “Le monachisme égyptien et les villes,” *Travaux et mémoires* 12 (1994) 1–44.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 3.

nasticism is spatially and socially more complex than that derived from the literary sources alone.

The significant presence of monastic centers within the inhabited zones (fertile valley, villages, and cities) of Egypt dispels the idea of Egyptian monasticism as a predominantly desert phenomenon. While isolated monasteries flourished in Egypt as a result of the discovery of the desert, Egyptian monasticism was neither in its origins a product of that discovery nor in its subsequent expansion a result of an ensuing flight from the *oikoumene*, or inhabited world, to the newly found isolation of the desert.<sup>4</sup> The growth of monasticism in Egypt did not follow a simple linear path from an ill-defined urban ascetic movement in the later third and early fourth centuries to the withdrawn desert monks of the fourth-century classical period to the large well-defined urban and suburban<sup>5</sup> monasteries of the later Byzantine era. While the discovery of the desert and the growth of desert monasticism intervenes temporally between the early urban ascetics and the later Byzantine monasteries, there is no reason to assume that it formed the necessary link between the two. Ascetic formation within the *oikoumene* developed continuously within the *oikoumene*. While the urban ascetics were not unaffected by the emergence of the desert ascetic movement, neither were they necessarily remade through it. The widespread presence of ascetic communities within the *oikoumene* in the Byzantine period represents, rather, a continuity in urban asceticism that reaches back to the formative apotactic movement identified by E. A. Judge.<sup>6</sup> I do not suggest a simple, direct path of development from the apotactic movement to the Byzantine monasteries, but argue that the practice of ascetic formation never left the *oikoumene*. While it expanded into the desert in the fourth century, it also continued to grow and develop within the inhabited regions of the Nile valley where it first began.

The rhetorical power of the desert image, however, still casts its shadow over the “history” of Egyptian monasticism. The portrayal of the Pachomian monastic movement, which began with the founding of the monastery of Tabennese in 323 CE, offers a case in point. The Pachomian movement,

<sup>4</sup>James E. Goehring, “The World Engaged: The Social and Economic World of Early Egyptian Monasticism,” in *idem*, et al., eds., *Gnosticism and the Early Christian World: In Honor of James M. Robinson* (Sonoma, CA: Polebridge, 1990) 130–44; and *idem*, “The Encroaching Desert: Literary Production and Ascetic Space in Early Christian Egypt,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 1 (1993) 281–96.

<sup>5</sup>I use the term “urban” loosely to indicate monasteries situated in or adjacent to towns and villages as distinct from true desert cells or communities. In reality, ascetic habitation existed across the full range of geographical possibilities in Egypt. See Goehring, “Encroaching Desert,” 281–96.

<sup>6</sup>E. A. Judge, “The Earliest Use of *Monachos* for ‘Monk’ (P. Coll. Youtie 77) and the Origins of Monasticism,” *JAC* 20 (1970) 72–89.

which postdates Antony's withdrawal to the desert, is often enrolled without reflection in the desert city formulated by Athanasius in his *Vita Antonii*.<sup>7</sup> The equation is simple. The seminal *Vita Antonii* defined Egyptian monasticism as a desert movement. Pachomian monasticism is an Egyptian monastic movement. Therefore, Pachomian monasticism is part of the desert movement. For example, in his article on "The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity," Peter Brown distinguished the less remote desert in Syria from the "true desert" of Egypt. In speaking of Egyptian monasticism, he asserted that:

to survive at all in the hostile environment of such a desert, the Egyptian had to transplant into it the tenacious and all-absorbing routines of the villages of the *oikoumene*. . . . Groups had to reproduce exactly, on the fringe of the desert, the closed-in, embattled aspect of the fortified villages of Upper Egypt. The monastery of Pachomius was called quite simply The Village.<sup>8</sup>

Pachomius's monastery of Tabennese, situated on the shore of the Nile in a village in which the monks built a church for the local inhabitants, has thus become a fortified desert community.<sup>9</sup>

I shall argue here that the emergence of Pachomian monasticism and the subsequent expansion and development of the movement is better understood within the context of urban asceticism. Pachomius founded his first two ascetic communities in deserted villages, and a careful review of the evidence suggests that the subsequent seven monasteries added to the *koinonia*, or community, in his lifetime were also situated in the fertile valley in or near villages whose names they bore. The Pachomians, who called themselves ἀποτάκτικοι ("renouncers"), supply an important link from the classical period of Egyptian monasticism between the early apotactic

<sup>7</sup>Note that the literary portrayals of the Pachomian movement also postdate Athanasius's idealization of Antony's withdrawal in his *Vita Antonii*. Text: PG 26.825–924; G. J. M. Bartelink, ed., *Athanase d'Alexandrie: Vie d'Antoine* (SC 400; Paris: Cerf, 1994). English translations: Robert C. Gregg, *Athanasius: The Life of Antony and the Letter to Marcellinus* (New York: Paulist Press, 1980); Robert T. Meyer, *St. Athanasius: The Life of Antony* (Ancient Christian Writers 10; New York: New Press, 1950).

<sup>8</sup>Peter Brown, "The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity," *JRelS* 61 (1971) 83; compare his later assessment in *The Body and Society: Men, Women and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988) 217.

<sup>9</sup>The same process is seen at work in Derwas Chitty's use of Athanasius's phrase, "The Desert a City," as the title for his general history of Egyptian and Palestinian monasticism (*The Desert a City: An Introduction to the Study of Egyptian and Palestinian Monasticism under the Christian Empire* [Oxford: Blackwell, 1966; reprinted London: Mowbrays, 1977]). See also the reference to "desert monasteries" in David Brakke, "Canon Formation and Social Conflict in Fourth-Century Egypt: Athanasius of Alexandria's Thirty-Ninth Festal Letter," *HTR* 87 (1994) 398.

movement of the towns and villages and the later urban monasteries of the Byzantine era. They illustrate the continuing draw of the *oikoumene* as a location for ascetic formation and ascetic community. Properly understood, Pachomian monasticism is not a product of the desert, but a form of village asceticism.

Tradition has bestowed on Antony and Pachomius the status of founders of early Egyptian monasticism. They serve as the movement's primary icons. Antony represents the anchoritic model of the ascetic life, Pachomius its coenobitic form.<sup>10</sup> Antony's earlier date has fashioned him as the individual representative of monastic origins. His discovery of the "ascetic" desert marks the beginning of the movement, and the withdrawn anchoritic life becomes its initial form of ascesis. This understanding of the origins of Egyptian monasticism depends in large part, however, on the widespread success of the purposeful biography of Antony published by the Alexandrian archbishop Athanasius. It is Athanasius who links ascetic practice so intimately with the discovery of the desert. In the *Vita Antonii*, he fashions the desert as the *telos*, or final [locational] goal, of male ascetic formation.<sup>11</sup> From his family home within his village, to the outskirts of the village, to nearby tombs, to a deserted fortress in the nearer desert, to the further desert along the Red Sea, Antony's ascetic progress is marked by a movement away from his village, away from the *oikoumene*, into the desert. The desert is the location of Antony's ascetic perfection and the source of this ascetic power.<sup>12</sup> His subsequent returns to the *oikoumene* are simply occasions for using his ascetic power on behalf of an ecclesiastical polity defined by Athanasius. The success of Athanasius's *Vita Antonii* made the desert the *sine qua non* of Egyptian asceticism.<sup>13</sup> True ascetics were desert ascetics. The power of the equation is seen in the tendency of authors to enroll later ascetics, regardless of the location of their cells or monasteries, as citizens of Athanasius's new ascetic city rising in the desert.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>10</sup>Karl Heussi, *Der Ursprung des Mönchtums* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1936; reprinted Aalen: Scientia, 1981) 69–131; Chitty, *Desert a City*, 1–11, 20–29.

<sup>11</sup>Athanasius's portrait of Antony was the most successful, though certainly not the only portrait of the saint. See David Brakke, *Athanasius and the Politics of Asceticism* (Oxford Early Christian Studies; Oxford: Clarendon, 1995); Samuel Rubenson, *The Letters of Antony: Origenist Theology, Monastic Tradition and the Making of a Saint* (Bibliotheca historico-ecclesiastica Lundensis 24; Lund: Lund University Press, 1990); Hermann Dörries, "Die *Vita Antonii* als Geschichtsquelle," *Nachrichten der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen, philologisch-historische Klasse* 14 (1949) 359–410.

<sup>12</sup>*Vita Antonii* 14.

<sup>13</sup>The process has much to do with the modern study of early Egyptian monasticism. In the aftermath of Chalcedon and the eventual Arabic domination, knowledge of Coptic developments mostly vanished outside of Egypt. Egyptian monasticism was defined through the monastic texts that had appeared in Greek and Latin: *Vita Antonii*, *Vita Pachomii*, and *Apophthegmata Patrum*.

<sup>14</sup>*Vita Antonii* 14; Wipszycka, "Le monachisme égyptien," 9.

Pachomius too became an inhabitant of this city.<sup>15</sup> Later authors interpret his coenobitic experiment as a secondary development born out of the original anchoritic model. Its origins too were understood to lie ultimately with Antony and the desert.<sup>16</sup> While it is true that Pachomius began his ascetic career as an anchorite under the desert ascetic Palamon, it is seldom acknowledged that his coenobitic innovation occurred through his withdrawal from the desert. In fact, his orientation to the *oikoumene* and its villages was quite distinct from that of Antony. Rather than moving in a direction that led ever further away from the village into the desert, Pachomius, in his ascetic career, never left the fertile Nile valley. He always moved within the sphere of the village, and his innovations occurred precisely through his return to and use of the village.

The Pachomian dossier suggests that Pachomius first came into contact with Christians as an imprisoned military conscript in Thebes around 312 CE.<sup>17</sup> He was amazed at the kindness of strangers who came to the prison to encourage the conscripts and give them food. He struck a deal with God that night in prayer promising to serve him and humankind all the days of his life should he be freed from prison. Released after Licinius's defeat of Maximinus Daia in 313,<sup>18</sup> he proceeded to the village of Šenesēt (Chenobos-

<sup>15</sup>The main Coptic and Greek texts of the *Life of Pachomius* have been edited by Lefort and Halkin respectively. L. Th. Lefort, ed., *S. Pachomii vita bohairice scripta* (CSCO 89; Scriptores coptici 7; Paris: e typographeo reipublicae, 1925; reprinted Louvain: CSCO, 1965); idem, *S. Pachomii vitae sahidice scriptae* (CSCO 99/100; Scriptores coptici 9/10; Paris: e typographeo reipublicae, 1933; reprinted Louvain: CSCO, 1965); François Halkin, *Sancti Pachomii vitae graecae* (Subsidia hagiographica 19; Bruxelles: Socété des Bollandistes, 1932). Translations: L. Th. Lefort, *Les vies coptes de saint Pachôme et des ses premiers successeurs* (Bibliothèque du muséon 16; Louvain: Bureaux du Muséon, 1943); Armand Veilleux, *Pachomian Koinonia*, vol. 1: *The Life of Saint Pachomius and His Disciples* (Cistercian Studies 45; Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1980). Citations from the first Greek life are cited as *G1*. Citations from the Coptic lives are cited as *Bo* (Bohairic) and *S* (Sahidic). The numeral immediately following the *S* identifies the specific Sahidic version (*S7* = Sahidic life number 7). *SBo* indicates the “complete” version fashioned by Veilleux by filling in *lacunae* in the Bohairic version from the Sahidic and Arabic texts. Following section numbers are those found in Veilleux's *Pachomian Koinonia*. Veilleux follows the sectional divisions for *G1* found in Halkin's *Sancti Pachomii*, and for *Bo*, those found in Lefort's *Les vies coptes*. The *vita* traditions are complex. A history of the debate can be found in James E. Goehring, *The Letter of Ammon and Pachomian Monasticism* (Patristische Texte und Studien 27; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1986) 3–23; for a discussion of the issues, see Philip Rousseau, *Pachomius: The Making of a Community in Fourth-Century Egypt* (The Transformation of the Classical Heritage 6; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985) 37–48.

<sup>16</sup>Such is already the case in the *Vita Pachomii*; *Bo* 2; *G1* 2.

<sup>17</sup>*Bo* 7–8. His parents are portrayed as non-Christian (*Bo* 4; *G1* 3). Note, however, that Pachomius's sister's name is given as Mary (*Bo* 27; not named in *G1* 32). A recent study of Bohairic chronology (Christoph Joest, “Ein Versuch zur Chronologie Pachoms und Theodoros,” *ZNW* 85 [1994] 132–44) argues for a date of 308 CE for Pachomius's conversion.

<sup>18</sup>The traditions do not, for the most part, correctly identify the emperor as Maximinus Daia. See Chitty, *Desert a City*, 7, 17 n. 39; and Veilleux, *Pachomian Koinonia*, 1. 267. Joest's

kion) where he was baptized.<sup>19</sup> He remained in the village and served the people, in part by gathering wood for them from the nearby acacia forests.<sup>20</sup> Eventually, he decided to embrace more fully the ascetic life and apprenticed himself under the old anchorite Palamon, who lived on the outskirts of the village of Šenesēt in a small patch of “interior” desert surrounded by fertile land.<sup>21</sup> Palamon was not a withdrawn desert anchorite of the type represented by the perfected Antony of Athanasius’s *Vita Antonii*, but an ascetic who lived on the edge of the village within the fertile valley. He is more akin to the old village ascetic whom Antony first emulated or to Antony himself in his initial ascetic withdrawal to “the places close to the village” (οἱ πρὸ τῆς κώμης τόποι).<sup>22</sup> The fact that Palamon lived in a desert has little bearing on his social connection with the village, since his desert was simply a barren patch of land in the fertile valley adjacent to the village.<sup>23</sup>

Pachomius remained with Palamon for seven years and continued his trips through the acacia forests. The *Vita Pachomii* reports that on one such trip he wandered ten miles south to the shore of the Nile river where he discovered the “deserted village” (Coptic: Ⲡϣϣϣϣ ⲙⲱⲣϣϣϣ; Greek: κώμη τις, ἔρημος οὐσα) of Tabennese.<sup>24</sup> It was the opportunity offered by his chance discovery of the deserted village that led to his decision to remain and build a monastery. Unlike Antony, Pachomius’s ascetic vocation was not fulfilled by withdrawing further into the desert. He did not move from his initial location near his village deeper into the desert to distance himself further from society. His ascetic career moved him in exactly the opposite direction. Pachomius finds ascetic perfection in his return to the village, albeit a deserted village on the shore of the Nile.

The religious tradition naturally understands both the discovery of the village of Tabennese and the decision to remain and build a monastery there as directed by God. The spirit led Pachomius to the village and once there, a voice from heaven instructed him to build a monastery. After confirming the vision with his ascetic father Palamon, Pachomius began the construction of the monastery.<sup>25</sup> Shorn of the religious interpretation, how-

revised chronology ("Ein Versuch," 144) calls this entire episode into question.

<sup>19</sup>Bo 8: Gl 5.

20 Bo 9

<sup>21</sup>Ba 10: Gl 6: compare Ba 15

22 *Vita Antonii* 3.3-4

<sup>23</sup>L. Th. Lefort, "Les premiers monastères pachômiens: Exploration topographique," *Muséon* 52 (1939) 383–87; Goehring, "Encroaching Desert," 288–89.

<sup>24</sup>*Bo* 17; *Gl* 12; on its location, see Lefort, "Les premiers monastères pachômiens," 293–97. Tabennese is the Sahidic spelling for the Bohairic Tabennesi. The Sahidic spellings are used for place names throughout this essay.

<sup>25</sup>Ro 17: Gl 12

ever, Pachomius's decision to relocate and fashion an ascetic community appears as an innovative idea triggered by the opportunity perceived in the "deserted" village. Ascetics were masters in the reuse of deserted space,<sup>26</sup> and Tabennese, if indeed it was deserted,<sup>27</sup> offered ready space and housing for an emerging ascetic community. Its location on the shore of the Nile made it particularly attractive in terms of the projected needs of such a community. Fertile land for vegetable gardens and the water necessary for their irrigation were immediately available,<sup>28</sup> as were the materials required for the traditional monastic work of basket and mat weaving.<sup>29</sup> Commercial markets for the monks' handiwork were close by,<sup>30</sup> and the Nile offered a ready means of transportation.<sup>31</sup> In fact, the subsequent expansion of the Pachomian *koinonia* into a system of affiliated monasteries spread over 175 kilometers between the towns of Šmin (Panopolis) and Snē (Latopolis) is difficult to imagine apart from the ease of transportation offered by the river. In the later periods of the movement, agricultural holdings outside of the monasteries proper were added,<sup>32</sup> and farming and irrigation regulations became an essential part of the community's rule.<sup>33</sup> As the community grew in size and wealth, its markets expanded<sup>34</sup> and its use of the Nile increased. Eventually, shipbuilding occurred within the monasteries,<sup>35</sup> and monks sailed

<sup>26</sup>Deserted tombs (*Vita Antonii* 8), fortresses (*Vita Antonii* 12), and temples (*Historia monachorum in Aegypto* 5; André-Jean Festugière, *Historia Monachorum Aegypto: Édition critique du texte grec et traduction annotée* [SH 53; Bruxelles: Société des Bollandistes, 1971] 41–43) were all put to use by ascetics. Open spaces within towns and villages likewise offered locations for monastic habitation. Wipszycka, "Les monachisme égyptien et les villes," 3.

<sup>27</sup>See below, pp. 272–74.

<sup>28</sup>*Bo* 23; *Gl* 24; compare *Gl* 106.

<sup>29</sup>See, for example, *Bo* 22; *Gl* 23; *Paralipomena* 9 (Halkin, *Sancti Pachomii Vitae Graecae*, 133–34); *Epistula Ammonis* 19 (Goehring, *The Letter of Ammon*, 139–41).

<sup>30</sup>*Bo* 26; *Gl* 28; compare *Paralipomena* 21–22.

<sup>31</sup>Travel often took place by ferry or boat (*Bo* 30), and boats were soon given to the Pachomian communities (*Bo* 53, 56). Communication with Alexandria likewise took place via travel up and down the Nile (*Bo* 28; *Gl* 30).

<sup>32</sup>In 367–68 CE, a monk (*apotaktikos*) named Anoubion made payment for taxes on good agricultural land (*apora*) in the Hermopolite nome that belonged to the monastery of Tabennese (*P. Berl. Inv.* 11860A/B). Ewa Wipszycka, "Les terres de la congrégation pachomienne dans une liste de payments pour les apora," in Jean Bingen, et al., eds., *Le monde grec pensée, littérature, histoire, documents: Hommages à Claire Préaux* (Bruxelles: L'Université Bruxelles, 1975) 623–36; compare *Gl* 106.

<sup>33</sup>*Regulations of Horsiesius* 55–64; L. Th. Lefort, *Oeuvres de s. Pachôme et de ses disciples* (CSCO 159; Scriptores coptici 23; Louvain: Durbecq, 1956; reprinted Louvain: CSCO, 1965) 98–99; Veilleux, *Pachomian Koinonia*, 2. 217–18.

<sup>34</sup>Note *Gl* 113, which mentions two boats returning from a commercial trip to Alexandria where the monks had sold mats to procure foodstuffs and tunics.

<sup>35</sup>*Gl* 146; compare *Bo* 204.

not only between the communities in Upper Egypt, but also to and from Alexandria, and possibly to Constantinople.<sup>36</sup> The subsequent growth of the *koinonia*'s agricultural and commercial dealings was a natural result of the original village orientation of the movement.<sup>37</sup> A truly desert movement could not have been so active in the common affairs of the society.

Pachomius's success in establishing a monastic community in the deserted village of Tabennese led him to seek out a second deserted village when the time for expansion arose. He built his second monastery at Pbow, a village located approximately three kilometers down river or west of Tabennese in the direction of Šenesēt.<sup>38</sup> One may assume that Pachomius knew the area well, since he had discovered Tabennese while walking from his earlier ascetic abode adjacent to Šenesēt. He could have passed by Pbow on such a trip. Pbow is the only Pachomian community whose actual location is still identifiable today. The remains of its great fifth-century basilica can still be seen on the edge of the modern village of Faw Qibli, which, while not located on the shore of the Nile, lies close to it in the heart of the greenbelt.<sup>39</sup> There is no inner desert surrounding Pbow, only fertile agricultural fields.<sup>40</sup> Moreover, the Pachomian dossier itself suggests that Pbow was near the river. The first Greek *Vita Pachomii* reports that when Theodore died at Pbow, the weeping of the brothers could be heard on the far side of the river.<sup>41</sup> The *Epistula Ammonis* refers to monks from Pbow arriving at an island in the river by boat.<sup>42</sup> Like Tabennese, Pbow was not a desert monastery. It was not even located on the fringe of the fertile valley, but in a "deserted" village in the heart of the greenbelt. Pachomius's use of a second deserted village to expand his community further underscores his commitment to the village rather than the desert. Both his initial innovative idea to create a communal form of the ascetic

<sup>36</sup> *SBo* 96, 124, 132; *G1* 113. Compare Roger Rémond ("Le monastère alexandrin de la metanoia etait-il bénéficiaire du fisc ou a son service?" in *Studi in onore de Edoardo Volterra*, vol. 5 [Milan: Giuffrè, 1971] 769–81) for a discussion of the involvement of the later Egyptian monasteries in the transportation of the grain tax not only on the Nile, but also between Alexandria and Constantinople.

<sup>37</sup> Goehring, "The World Engaged," 139–41.

<sup>38</sup> *Bo* 49; *G1* 54; on its location, see Lefort, "Les premiers monastères pachomiens," 387–93.

<sup>39</sup> Peter Grossmann, "The Basilica of St. Pachomius," *BA* 42 (1979) 232–36; note the map of the site on p. 234. A color photograph of the remains of the basilica (p. 203) offers a good illustration of its location at the edge of the village, well within the fertile valley.

<sup>40</sup> Egyptian villages were normally surrounded by fertile land (Bagnall, *Egypt in Late Antiquity*, 114).

<sup>41</sup> *G1* 149.

<sup>42</sup> *Epistula Ammonis* 28; compare *Bo* 59–60; *G1* 55, 60, 109, 113. The point of embarkation for the monks from Pbow may have been Šenesēt (*G1* 107).

life and his later development of a system of affiliated monasteries occurred through his discovery and use of deserted villages.

Although the “deserted village” becomes something of a literary *topos* in the Pachomian tradition,<sup>43</sup> there is little reason to doubt the deserted nature of the villages of Tabennese and Pbow when Pachomius first stumbled upon them. It is clear from later sources that vacant buildings and open land both within and adjacent to the towns and villages of Egypt were being occupied by the growing ascetic population.<sup>44</sup> Although the question still remains as to the precise meaning of the term “deserted” (Ἐρημος) as it is applied to the villages, the Pachomian accounts of Tabennese and Pbow likely fit this pattern. While the Pachomian accounts suggest a completely vacant village akin to the ghost towns of the old American west, it is possible that the label indicates nothing more than that a sufficient degree of vacancy and open space existed within the villages to enable Pachomius to establish ascetic communities there.<sup>45</sup> Any population loss rendered portions of a village vacant and thus made available living space for ascetics. One need not press the deserted nature of the village too far to imagine Pachomius’s decision to establish his new community there.

While village populations and house occupancy remained relatively stable in Egypt,<sup>46</sup> tax and census records preserved among papyrus documents demonstrate that village populations could fluctuate for various reasons and that, on occasion, the complete desertion of a village did occur. Not all of the reasons are relevant to the cases of Tabennese and Pbow. The evidence of village growth and decline in the Fayyum, for example, where the changing reach of the irrigation system and disputes over water determined village viability, has little application to the case of Tabennese or Pbow which were situated on or near the shore of the Nile.<sup>47</sup> On the other hand, the

<sup>43</sup>Note that the author of the Bohairic *Vita* asserts that Šenesêt too was deserted when Pachomius first arrived (*Bo* 8). The fact that it contained some inhabitants and that Pachomius was baptized in its church and cared for many of its people during the subsequent plague gives the author no pause. Pachomius’s initial efforts were linked with deserted villages; since he began his ascetic career in Šenesêt, it too became deserted for the author.

<sup>44</sup>Note the description of Oxyrhynchus in the *Historia monachorum in Aegypto* 5; Wipszycka, “Le monachisme égyptien et les villes,” 3.

<sup>45</sup>This may result from the use of “deserted” to refer to less than complete depopulation, or it may arise from exaggeration in the *vita* tradition.

<sup>46</sup>Peter van Minnen, “House-to-House Enquiries: An Interdisciplinary Approach to Roman Karanis,” *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphie* 100 (1994) 230–31; compare Lewis, *Life in Egypt under Roman Rule*, 65–67.

<sup>47</sup>Neglect of the irrigation system, disputes over water, and the burden of Roman taxation (including liturgies) all effected village economies and population. J. A. S. Evans, *A Social and Economic History of an Egyptian Temple in the Greco-Roman Period* (Yale Classical Studies 17; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961) 276–77, 282–83; Deborah Hobson,

effect of Roman taxation in all its forms<sup>48</sup> may well apply to the situation of Tabennese and Pbow. Individual flight to avoid taxes and service was common throughout the history of Roman Egypt,<sup>49</sup> and, on occasion, it accounted for a sizable loss in a village's population. Records from the mid-first-century Arsinoite village of Philadelphia illustrate the possible severity of such tax desertion. At the height of the problem in 57 CE, one in every seven or eight men from the village of Philadelphia was a tax fugitive. The situation was so severe that those responsible for the collection of the taxes, which were set for the village regardless of its population, pleaded with the prefect for an adjustment.<sup>50</sup>

While the case of Philadelphia comes from a much earlier period, we know that the problem persisted in the period of Roman rule.<sup>51</sup> As such, it suggests a sequence of events that could account for the vacated property discovered and used by Pachomius in both Tabennese and Pbow. If this were the case, however, it would suggest that the term "deserted," as applied to Tabennese and Pbow in the Pachomian texts, refers to a population loss rather than to the total abandonment of the village. While tax desertion was a significant problem in Egypt, it does not appear that it led to the complete desertion of a village. On the other hand, the problems encountered by a village that experienced considerable desertion in meeting its tax obligations may well explain the local acceptance of the Pachomians' occupation of vacant village property and land. If the Pachomians occupied deserted land and paid taxes on it, their entry into the village would have been a boon to the village economy.<sup>52</sup>

<sup>48</sup>"Agricultural Land and Economic Life in Soknopaiou Nesos," *BASP* 21 (1984) 108; Peter van Minnen, "Deserted Villages: Two Late Antique Town Sites in Egypt," *BASP* 32 (1995) 41–55; Arthur E. R. Boak, "An Egyptian Farmer of the Age of Diocletian and Constantine," *Byzantina Metabyzantina* 1 (1946) 53; compare Bagnall, *Egypt in Late Antiquity*, 138–39.

<sup>49</sup>Lewis, *Life in Egypt under Roman Rule*, 159–84; Bagnall, *Egypt in Late Antiquity*, 153–60, 172–74; Boak, "An Egyptian Farmer," 39–53.

<sup>50</sup>Lewis, *Life in Egypt under Roman Rule*, 163–65, 183–84; Bagnall, *Egypt in Late Antiquity*, 144; Arthur E. R. Boak and Herbert C. Youtie, "Flight and Oppression in Fourth-Century Egypt," in Edoardo Arslan, ed., *Studi in onore di Aristide Calderini e Roberto Paribeni* (2 vols.; Milan: Ceschina, 1956–57) 2. 325–37; Allan Chester Johnson, *An Economic Survey of Ancient Rome*, vol. 2: *Roman Egypt to the Reign of Diocletian* (ed. Tenney Frank; Paterson, NJ: Pageant, 1959) 114–15 (P. Upps. 7), 482–83, 546; Rousseau, *Pachomius*, 9–10.

<sup>51</sup>Lewis, *Life in Egypt under Roman Rule*, 164–65; Alan K. Bowman, *Egypt after the Pharaohs: 332 BC–AD 642 from Alexander to the Arab Conquest* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986) 77.

<sup>52</sup>Boak and Youtie, "Flight and Oppression," 325–37; Lewis, *Life in Egypt under Roman Rule*, 163–65, 183–84; Bowman, *Egypt after the Pharaohs*, 77; Bagnall, *Egypt in Late Antiquity*, 144; Rousseau, *Pachomius*, 9–10.

<sup>53</sup>Goehring, "The World Engaged," 139–40; Wipszycka, "Les terres de la congrégation pachômienne," 623–36. This may have been the case for Pbow in particular, since the evidence for the Pachomians' revitalization of Tabennese would probably have been known by that time.

A second cause of village decline was plague. While tax desertion had a more limited effect on village population, the outbreak of plague could and did result in village abandonment. Documents from the reign of Marcus Aurelius (161–180 CE) supply an example of the rapid population decline in certain villages as their inhabitants fled an outbreak of plague. In one case, surviving records report a fall in the number of village males from twenty-seven to three to zero.<sup>53</sup> The reality of plague is also apparent in the Pachomian dossier. The Bohairic *Vita* reports that a plague ravaged the village of Šenesēt during Pachomius's initial sojourn there prior to his apprenticeship under Palamon.<sup>54</sup> Pachomius himself died in 346 CE in a plague that decimated the *koinonia*.<sup>55</sup> Another outbreak occurred during Theodore's leadership of the community.<sup>56</sup> Such an outbreak, perhaps even the specific one experienced by Pachomius in Šenesēt, may account for the deserted nature of the villages of Tabennese and Pbow. Plague may have created the opportunity for Pachomius's innovative translation of deserted villages into ascetic villages. This explanation of the term “deserted,” which corresponds most closely with the accounts in the Pachomian literary tradition, supports the interpretation of “deserted” as a more extensive population loss in the villages prior to their use by Pachomius.

While we can never know with certainty the degree to which the villages were deserted when first inhabited by the Pachomians, it is clear that they did not remain deserted for long after the Pachomians' arrival. According to the Bohairic *Vita*, the lay population of Tabennese grew so rapidly after the Pachomians entered the village that the monks built a church for the villagers even before they constructed one for themselves. They attended the village church to partake of the eucharist.<sup>57</sup> While less is said of Pbow, one suspects a similar situation.

Archaeological efforts place the monastery on the edge of the modern village of Faw Qibli, and dredge work some 750 meters beyond the monastery in the farmland has revealed the remains of sizable Roman structures.<sup>58</sup> While it may have been the deserted nature of the village that initially drew the Pachomians to it, they did not understand their occupation of the village as exclusive. While they did establish an ascetic village within the village, they also brought the village, as village, back to life. Ascetic withdrawal for the Pachomians occurred within the village, even-

<sup>53</sup>Lewis, *Life in Egypt under Roman Rule*, 68 (only males are recorded); van Minnen, “Deserted Villages,” 43.

<sup>54</sup>*Bo* 9.

<sup>55</sup><sup>57</sup> Lefort, *S. Pachomii vitae sahidice scriptae*, 87–96; *SBo* 117–23; *G1* 114–17.

<sup>56</sup>*Bo* 180; *G1* 139.

<sup>57</sup>*Bo* 25; *G1* 29.

<sup>58</sup>James E. Goehring, “New Frontiers in Pachomian Studies,” in Birger A. Pearson and James E. Goehring, eds., *The Roots of Egyptian Christianity* (Studies in Antiquity and Christianity 1; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986) 252–57.

tually behind a gated wall. It was never accomplished by spatial separation from the village in the near or distant desert. While undoubtedly controlled to some degree, social interaction between the Pachomians and the non-ascetic village population was part of the Pachomian ascetic life from its inception.

The village pattern inaugurated by the use of Tabennese and Pbow continued in the later Pachomian establishments. While the precise locations of the subsequent seven monasteries added to the *koinonia* in Pachomius's lifetime<sup>59</sup> are not known with any degree of certainty,<sup>60</sup> the evidence suggests that like Tabennese and Pbow, they are best understood as village communities. Like Tabennese and Pbow, two of the later establishments, the monasteries of Šenesēt (Chenoboskion)<sup>61</sup> and Šmin (Panopolis),<sup>62</sup> were clearly named after the village or town with which they were associated. There is every reason to assume that they were located in or near the villages whose names they bore. One may argue that the monastery of Šenesēt was situated in Palamon's "interior desert,"<sup>63</sup> but the location of the "interior desert" adjacent to the village argues for the close association of the monastery with the village. Šenesēt itself, with its "interior desert," was located near the Nile in the greenbelt at a considerable distance from the desert proper.<sup>64</sup>

<sup>59</sup>A female monastery was established in the village of Tabennese, although it is never included in the number of monasteries listed in the sources. It is viewed as a sister monastery of Tabennese. *Bo* 27; *Gl* 32 (Greek text in François Halkin, *Le corpus athénien de saint Pachôme* [Geneva: Cramer, 1982] 21–22).

<sup>60</sup>Although Lefort's efforts to connect the Pachomian monasteries to specific sites are intriguing, they remain speculative ("Les premiers monastères pachômiens," 379–407). Compare M. Jullien, "A la recherche de Tabenne et des autres monastères fondés par saint Pachôme," *Études* 89 (1901) 238–58; Henri Gauthier, "Notes géographiques sur le nome Panopolite," *BIFAO* 4 (1904) 63–64, 86–87, 94–95; idem, "Nouvelles notes géographiques sur le nome Panopolite," *BIFAO* 10 (1912) 93–94, 103, 121–27; René-Georges Coquin, "Akhmim," in Aziz S. Atiya, ed., *The Coptic Encyclopedia* (8 vols.; New York: Macmillan, 1991) 1. 784.

<sup>61</sup>*Bo* 50; *Gl* 54. The monastery of Šenesēt was the third community in the *koinonia*. It had existed independently under the leadership of an old ascetic named Ebonh prior to joining the Pachomian system and was already known as the monastery of Šenesēt when Pachomius accepted it into the *koinonia*.

<sup>62</sup>The monastery of Šmin, the sixth community in the *koinonia*, is not named as such in the main published editions of the *Vita Pachomii* (see above, n. 14). Pages preserved in Toronto, however, include Šmin in a list of Pachomian establishments. Donald Spanel, "A Toronto Sahidic Addition to the Pakhom Dossier (*Fischer A1*, ff. 1–2)," *The Ancient World* 6 (1983) 115–25.

<sup>63</sup>This is the site of the current Monastery of Palamon. René-Georges Coquin and Maurice Martin, "Anba Palaemon," in Atiya, *The Coptic Encyclopedia*, 3. 757; for a photograph that shows the relationship of the monastery to the village, see James M. Robinson, "The Discovery of the Nag Hammadi Codices," *BA* 42 (1979) 208.

<sup>64</sup>Lefort, "Les premiers monastères pachômiens," 383–87.

The Pachomian monastery of Šmin was built on land donated by the bishop of Šmin.<sup>65</sup> The bishop's additional gift of a boat supports the placement of this monastery near the Nile rather than in the desert. Furthermore, the opposition of townspeople to the construction of the monastery makes more sense if the proposed monastery was being built on land valuable to the community. Šmin, a nome (or district) capital, was not a deserted village where land and housing were more readily available. In the nome capitals, land and housing were more valuable and in greater demand.<sup>66</sup> The building of a monastery in such a location was likely seen by some of the inhabitants as adding unnecessary pressure on the town's limited resources.<sup>67</sup>

The locations of the Pachomian monasteries whose names do not correspond to known village names remain more speculative. If the pattern of village monasteries established above is correct, however, there is little reason to place the other monasteries in the desert. The Pachomian sources report that the monastery of Tse was located in the land of Šmin (Q  $\overline{\kappa}$   $\overline{\tau}$   $\kappa$   $\alpha$   $\omega$   $\mu$   $\iota$   $\eta$ )<sup>68</sup> and the monastery of Tsmine in the vicinity of Šmin (Π  $\kappa$   $\kappa$   $\omega$   $\tau$   $\overline{\eta}$   $\omega$   $\mu$   $\iota$   $\eta$ ).<sup>69</sup> While these designations could indicate a desert location, they could equally identify communities situated in or near villages of the same names in the Panopolite nome. The latter alternative follows the pattern established by Tabennese, Pbow, Šenesēt, and Šmin. Unless proof exists to the contrary, it seems most appropriate to assume that the pattern held. While inconclusive, evidence from the *Vita Pachomii* can easily support a village location for these communities.<sup>70</sup>

<sup>65</sup> S5 (Lefort, *S. Pachomii vitae sahidice scriptae*, 146–47); SBo 54; compare *GI* 81.

<sup>66</sup> Deborah W. Hobson, "House and Household in Roman Egypt," *YCS* 28 (1985) 225; Bagnall, *Egypt in Late Antiquity*, 111 n. 11.

<sup>67</sup> While the cause of the townspeople's opposition to the Pachomians is not given, there is no reason to assume that they opposed them on religious grounds alone.

<sup>68</sup> S5 (Lefort, *S. Pachomii vitae sahidice scriptae*, 145); SBo 52; compare *GI* 83; on its location, see Lefort, "Les premiers monastères pachômiens," 403–4. The monastery of Tse was the fifth community in the *koinonia*.

<sup>69</sup> Bo 57 (Lefort, *S. Pachomii vita bohirice scripta*, 56); *GI* 83; on its location, see Lefort, "Les premiers monastères pachômiens," 403–4. The monastery of Tsmine was the eighth community in the *koinonia*.

<sup>70</sup> The author of the Sahidic account of the founding of Tse follows it immediately with the story of a gift of a boat to the Pachomians by a city councilor from Kos (Apollinopolis; modern Kous) (S5 [Lefort, *S. Pachomii vitae sahidice scriptae*, 145–46]; SBo 53). The boat is offered so that Pachomius might receive cargo for the monks' use. While the gift of the boat is not linked directly to the monastery of Tse, the placement of the story immediately after the account of the founding of Tse suggests an association between the two in the mind of the author. While the distance between Šmin and Kos (over 150 kilometers along the Nile) militates against an actual connection between the two stories, the very nature of the gift, that is, a boat for delivering cargo to the monasteries of the *koinonia*, underscores the author's understanding of the *koinonia* as a group of affiliated monasteries connected by the river. The gift

There is little evidence for the location of the Pachomian monastery of Tmousons,<sup>71</sup> although once again there is an indication of travel to and from the monastery by boat<sup>72</sup> which suggests its location near the Nile. Lefort's calculation of distances between this community and the others in the Pachomian *koinonia* likewise supports its location in the fertile valley.<sup>73</sup> There is certainly no reason to situate it in the desert. The monastery of Tbewe, founded by Petronius, was located on lands belonging to his wealthy parents.<sup>74</sup> This alone suggests land within the fertile valley, a conclusion further supported by Petronius's father's donation of livestock, carts, and boats to the Pachomians.<sup>75</sup>

Phnoum is the final monastery to enter the system in Pachomius's lifetime and is the only one for which a desert location is even suggested. It was located in the vicinity of the nome capital of Snē (Latopolis). The Greek *Vita Pachomii* locates it simply near the town of Snē (ἄνω περὶ Λατῶν),<sup>76</sup> the Sahidic *Vita* in the district or nome of Snē (ΠΤΟΥ ΝCΝΗ),<sup>77</sup> and the Bohairic *Vita* in the mountain of Snē (ΠΤΩΟΤ ΝCΝΗ).<sup>78</sup> If one accepts the Greek and Sahidic reading as correct, then like the other Pachomian establishments, the monastery of Phnoum can easily be located in the fertile valley. It is only if one gives the Bohairic reading primacy that one might place the monastery in the desert of Snē, since the term "mountain" (Coptic: ΤΟΟጥ; Greek: ὄπος) is commonly

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of a boat was easily understood and fit readily into the account of monasteries established in the fertile Nile valley; it is hard to imagine an author's use of such a story in an account of desert communities.

<sup>71</sup> *SBo* 51 (equals *Bo* 51 plus missing pages from 55 [Lefort, *S. Pachomii vitae sahidice scriptae*, 145]); *G1* 54. The monastery of Tmousons was the fourth community in the *koinonia*.

<sup>72</sup> *Bo* 59; *G1* 55; but note *Bo* 81, 95.

<sup>73</sup> Lefort, "Les premiers monastères pachômiens," 400; Coquin and Martin, "Dayr Anba Bidaba," in Atiya, *The Coptic Encyclopedia*, 3. 731–32. Lefort suggested Tmousons's possible identification with Dayr Anba Bidaba, a monastery-village located beside a pond in the midst of the cultivated zone some two kilometers west of Nag Hammadi.

<sup>74</sup> *Bo* 56; *G1* 80; on its location, see Lefort, "Les premiers monastères pachômiens," 399–403. The monastery of Tbewe was the seventh community in the *koinonia*. Petronius, its founder, came from the town of Pdjodj, located in the diocese of Hiw (Diospolis parva). Pdjodj has been identified with the modern village of Abu-Chouche, located on the western shore of the Nile.

<sup>75</sup> While it is not specifically stated that the donation went to his son's community, there is no reason to think otherwise.

<sup>76</sup> *G1* 83 (Halkin, *Sancti Pachomii vitae graecae*, 56–57).

<sup>77</sup> *S4* 58 (Lefort, *S. Pachomii vitae sahidice scriptae*, 230; idem, *Les vies coptes de saint Pachôme et de ses premiers successeurs*, 303. Lefort chooses to translate ΕΠΤΟΥ ΝCΝΗ as "à la montagne de Snē."

<sup>78</sup> *Bo* 58 (Lefort, *S. Pachomii vita bohairice scripta*, 56–57); on its location, see Lefort, "Les premiers monastères pachômiens," 404–7.

translated as desert.<sup>79</sup> Since the Bohairic version was translated from the Sahidic,<sup>80</sup> it seems more likely that the use of the term “mountain” (**ΤΟΟΤ**) reflects a scribal shift from the term “district” (**ΤΟΠ**), perhaps under the influence of the growing association of monasticism with the desert. The monastery’s proximity to the town of Snē is further suggested by the local opposition that its construction aroused. The bishop himself led the crowd that sought to drive the Pachomians away. It thus seems most appropriate to assume that Phnoum, like the other Pachomian monasteries, was located in the fertile valley near the village of Phnoum in the Latopolite nome.

None of the nine monasteries in the Pachomian system were named after an individual, as was often the case with later singular establishments.<sup>81</sup> In the first half of the fourth century, ascetics had not yet garnered the fame that resulted in monasteries bearing their names. When Ebonh, Jonas, and Petronius joined their ascetic communities to the Pachomian *koinonia*, they were already known as the monasteries of Šenesēt, Tmousons, and Tbewe, respectively.<sup>82</sup> In those cases where the origin of the name of a Pachomian monastery is known, namely, Tabennese, Pbow, Šenesēt, and Šmin, the name derives directly from the name of the village or town with which the monastery is associated. Furthermore, in the two cases where the precise spatial relationship between the monastery and the village or town is clear, namely, Tabennese and Pbow, the monastery was located in or beside the village in the fertile valley. The monastery of Tabennese was the ascetic community located in and thus connected with the village of Tabennese. One suspects that the remaining Pachomian establishments, the precise locations of which are unclear, were similarly called after the villages whose

<sup>79</sup>W. E. Crum, “**ΤΟΟΤ**,” *A Coptic Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1939) 440–41; Lefort, “Les premiers monastères pachômiens,” 404–7. Even if one accepts the term “mountain,” however, the precise location of the monastery remains unclear. The term occurs in papyrus documents in reference to the further or proper desert, to the nearer desert or escarpment at the edge of the fertile zone, as well as to raised arable land that borders the desert (H. Cadell and Roger Rémondon, “Sens et emplois de τὸ ὄρος dans les documents papyrologiques,” *Revue des études grecques* 80 (1967) 343–49). Thus even if one accepts the Bohairic reading, there is no assurance that the monastery of Phnoum was located in the desert. A lease contract dated 616 CE (*P. Lond.* 483), for example, refers to a monastery, hamlet and fields located in the mountain of the village of Tanaithis (ἐν τῷ ὄρει κώμης Ταναίθεως). The text refers to livestock and pasture, and even fish in the waters around the monastery (πάσσαι ὄψαρια ἐκ τῶν παντοίων ὑδάτων τῶν περικύκλωθεν τοῦ αὐτοῦ μοναστηρίου). The monastery of Phnoum may well have existed in a similar location in or near a village of the same name in the Latopolite nome.

<sup>80</sup>Lefort, *Les vies coptes*, lxxviii; Veilleux, *Pachomian Koinonia*, 1. 2.

<sup>81</sup>Peter van Minnen, “The Roots of Egyptian Christianity,” *Archiv für Papyrusforschung und verwandte Gebiete* 40 (1994) 84–85.

<sup>82</sup>*Bo* 50–51, 56; *Gl* 54, 80.

names they bore. The monasteries of Tse and Tsmine, for example, located in the land or vicinity of Šmin (Panopolis), were likely situated in or beside villages of the same names in the Panopolite nome. The social, commercial, and agricultural efforts of the Pachomian monasteries support such a close and intimate relationship with their neighboring village communities.

A careful reading of the Pachomian sources supports this contention.<sup>83</sup> It has already been noted above that the foundation of Tabennese led to such an increase in the village population that the monks built a church for the villagers before they constructed one for themselves.<sup>84</sup> At least in the beginning, they continued to receive the eucharist in the village church. When Theodore's mother came to Tabennese with letters from the local bishop demanding to see her son, she was only permitted to catch sight of him by climbing up on the roof of a nearby house.<sup>85</sup> The monastery of Tabennese was clearly situated in the village.

The monastery of Pbow was likewise situated in the fertile valley where it was effected by the flooding of the Nile. During a plague that ravaged the community, the brothers were distressed because the rising waters cut off their path to the mountain or cemetery in the desert.<sup>86</sup> The Greek *Vita* indicates that the flood normally reached such a height around the monastery that the monks traveled by boat during the flood season.<sup>87</sup> Elsewhere in the sources, one reads of monks working fields on an island in the Nile<sup>88</sup> and gathering fruit from orchards outside the monastery walls.<sup>89</sup> Monks unload a wealthy councilor's gift of wheat from his boat anchored nearby,<sup>90</sup> and in time of famine, they purchase wheat on the local market.<sup>91</sup> Specific monks were appointed to sell the *koinonia*'s handicrafts and make the necessary purchases for the community, practices that underscore the community's contact with the outside world.<sup>92</sup> In the *Regula Pachomii*, while permission is required to leave the monastery,<sup>93</sup> monks may walk about the village at certain times and even visit their families.<sup>94</sup> Permission was also

<sup>83</sup>Goehring, "The World Engaged," 134–44.

<sup>84</sup>See above, pp. 273–74; *Bo* 25; *Gl* 29.

<sup>85</sup>*Bo* 37; compare *Gl* 37. James E. Goehring, "Theodore's Entry into the Pachomian Movement," in Vincent L. Wimbush, ed., *Ascetic Behavior in Greco-Roman Antiquity: A Sourcebook* (Studies in Antiquity and Christianity 6; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990) 349–56.

<sup>86</sup>*Bo* 180.

<sup>87</sup>*Gl* 139.

<sup>88</sup>*Gl* 106.

<sup>89</sup>*Regula Pachomii, Praecepta* 76–77.

<sup>90</sup>*Bo* 39; *Gl* 39.

<sup>91</sup>*Paralipomena* 21–22.

<sup>92</sup>*Bo* 26; *Gl* 28.

<sup>93</sup>*Regula Pachomii, Praecepta* 84.

<sup>94</sup>*Regula Pachomii, Praecepta* 90, 102, 54. In the two cases that refer to monks in the village, Jerome changes the text in his Latin translation to *in monasterio*. See Veilleux, *Pachomian Koinonia*, 2. 189.

required to go to the monastery's shops or stables and to launch a boat or skiff from the harbor.<sup>95</sup> The stables were essential given the gifts of sheep, goats, cattle, camels, and donkeys to the *koinonia*.<sup>96</sup> Extensive pasturage for the livestock would have also been required. The necessary involvement of the Pachomians in agricultural life is underscored by the detailed farming and irrigation legislation in the later *Regulations of Horsiesius*.<sup>97</sup> While the ascetic nature of the movement necessitated its regulation of contact between the monks and the wider society, the location and needs of the *koinonia* made such contact not only unavoidable, but essential. The *Regulations of Horsiesius* simply assert that conversation with seculars whom monks meet on the road be done for the glory of God.<sup>98</sup>

While the ascetic enterprise emphasized withdrawal, the Pachomians practiced withdrawal within the normal sphere of village life. The village monasteries of the Pachomians continued the urban ascetic presence of the earlier apotactic movement, albeit with considerably greater planning and organization. It was not by accident that the Pachomians called themselves *apotaktikoi* rather than monks or coenobites.<sup>99</sup> As the papyrus evidence of the urban *apotaktikoi(ai)* illustrates their legal and social connection with the wider community,<sup>100</sup> so too the Pachomian evidence reveals their legal and social integration within Roman Egypt.<sup>101</sup> A list of tax receipts from 367–68 CE for agricultural land (ἀπορά) in the Hermopolite nome includes a payment by the *apotaktikos* Anoubion, son of Horion, for the monastery of Tabennese.<sup>102</sup> Twenty-one years after Pachomius's death, the monastery of Tabennese, located in the Tentyrite nome, was responsible for taxes on land located at a considerable distance from it in the Hermopolite nome. In the time since his death, his successor Theodore expanded the *koinonia* by founding two additional monasteries near the town of Hermopolis, the capital of the Hermopolite nome.<sup>103</sup> It may be that the older community at Tabennese was legally responsible for land possessed and worked by the younger communities in the Hermopolite nome. Whatever the case, the

<sup>95</sup> *Regula Pachomii, Praecepta*, 108, 111, 118.

<sup>96</sup> *Bo* 56; *G1* 80.

<sup>97</sup> *Regulations of Horsiesius* 55–64.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.

<sup>99</sup> James E. Goehring, "Through a Glass Darkly: Diverse Images of the *Apotaktikoi(ai)* of Early Egyptian Monasticism," *Semeia* 58 (1992) 28.

<sup>100</sup> Judge, "The Earliest Use of *Monachos*," 72–89; idem, "Fourth Century Monasticism in the Papyri," in Roger Bagnall, ed., *Proceedings of the Sixteenth International Congress of Papyrology, New York, 24–31 July 1980* (American Studies in Papyrology 23; Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1981) 613–20; Goehring, "Through a Glass Darkly," 139–41.

<sup>101</sup> Goehring, "The World Engaged," 139–41.

<sup>102</sup> *P. Berl. inv. 11860A/B*; Wipszycka, "Les terres de la congrégation pachômienne," 623–36; Judge ("The Earliest Use of *Monachos*," 73–74) makes the same point with respect to the *monachos* that appears in a Karanis petition.

<sup>103</sup> *G1* 134.

location of the Pachomian *koinonia* within the legal structures of fourth-century Roman Egypt is clear. There is no reason to doubt that the connection began with Pachomius's innovative move into the "deserted" village of Tabennese. While the land he occupied may have been deserted, as possessable land, his occupation of it would undoubtedly have been noted.<sup>104</sup> Agricultural land would have been taxable from the start of his communal efforts.<sup>105</sup> As his community expanded through the occupation of additional village property and agricultural land, the *koinonia*'s legal and social responsibilities would have increased proportionately. One suspects that the appointment of a steward (**ΟΙΚΟΝΟΜΟΣ**) at each individual monastery and a great steward (**ΠΙΣΤΙΣΤΗ ΝΟΙΚΟΝΟΜΟΣ**) for the *koinonia* as a whole, as well as the annual financial reckoning in August, for which the leaders of all the individual monasteries came together at the central monastery of Pbow, were necessitated in part by the legal demands of Roman Egypt.<sup>106</sup> Like the *apotaktikoi(ai)* before them, the Pachomians possessed their land and paid their taxes. They too developed and practiced their asceticism within the social and legal framework of the towns and villages of Egypt.

In a similar fashion, the village monasteries of the Pachomian *koinonia* presage the later forms of urban monasticism recognized by Wipszycka in the Byzantine period. The Pachomian monasteries were not located in the distant desert or even on the marginal land where the desert begins,<sup>107</sup> but in or in close proximity to the towns and villages whose names they bore.

<sup>104</sup>The question of the legal availability of vacant land and buildings for occupancy by individuals like Pachomius lies beyond the scope of the present essay. In the period in question, the *praescriptio longi temporis* awarded uncontested possession of property to an individual who had been in possession of it for forty years, regardless of how the person actually came into possession of it (Casper J. Kramer and Naphtali Lewis, "A Referee's Hearing on Ownership," *Transactions of the American Philological Society* 68 (1937) 357–87; Roger S. Bagnall and Naphtali Lewis, *Columbia Papyri VII: Fourth Century Documents from Karanis* (American Studies in Papyrology 20; Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1979) 173–85; J. A. Crook, *Legal Advocacy in the Roman World* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995) 104–7). The cultivation of land in this period was often unprofitable (Kraemer and Lewis, "A Referee's Hearing," 366–67). This may account for the lack of opposition to Pachomius's occupation of it. On the other hand, the opposition of local townspeople to his founding of a monastery near the nome capital of Šmin (*G1* 81) may have been occasioned in part by legal concerns over the land in question. Documents do record disputes over vacant property (*SB* 5232; Johnson, *An Economic Survey of Ancient Rome*, 158–59) and complaints about others encroaching on one's land (van Minnen, "House-to-House Enquiries," 244–45).

<sup>105</sup>Urban property was not taxed. See Bagnall, *Egypt in Late Antiquity*, 153.

<sup>106</sup>Goehring, "The World Engaged," 141; Fidelis Ruppert, *Das pachomianische Mönchtum und die Anfänge klösterlichen Gehorsams* (Münsterschwarzach: Vier-Türme-Verlag, 1971) 320–24.

<sup>107</sup>Compare the White Monastery of Shenute. Coquin and Martin, "Dayr Anba Shinudah, History," in Atiya, *The Coptic Encyclopedia*, 1. 761–66.

They were not part of the desert city whose praises Athanasius sang, but rather an expansive development of ascetic practice within the towns and villages of Upper Egypt. Their communities indicate a developmental path from the earlier, less organized forms of urban asceticism represented in the apotactic movement to the later, more structured forms of ascetic practice seen in the urban and suburban monasteries of the Byzantine period. The Pachomian monasteries illustrate the steady and innovative growth of asceticism within the towns and villages of Egypt. They were not a product of the desert movement, but rather serve to challenge the common portrayal of Egyptian monasticism as a predominantly desert phenomenon.<sup>108</sup>

<sup>108</sup> Melitian ascetic communities also appear to have been closely connected with villages. *P. Lond.* 1913 refers to a community in the village of Hipponon in communication with the monastery of Hathor in the eastern desert of the Upper Cynopolite nome. See James E. Goehring, “Melitian Monastic Organization: A Challenge to Pachomian Originality,” *Studia Patristica* 25 (1993) 388–95.